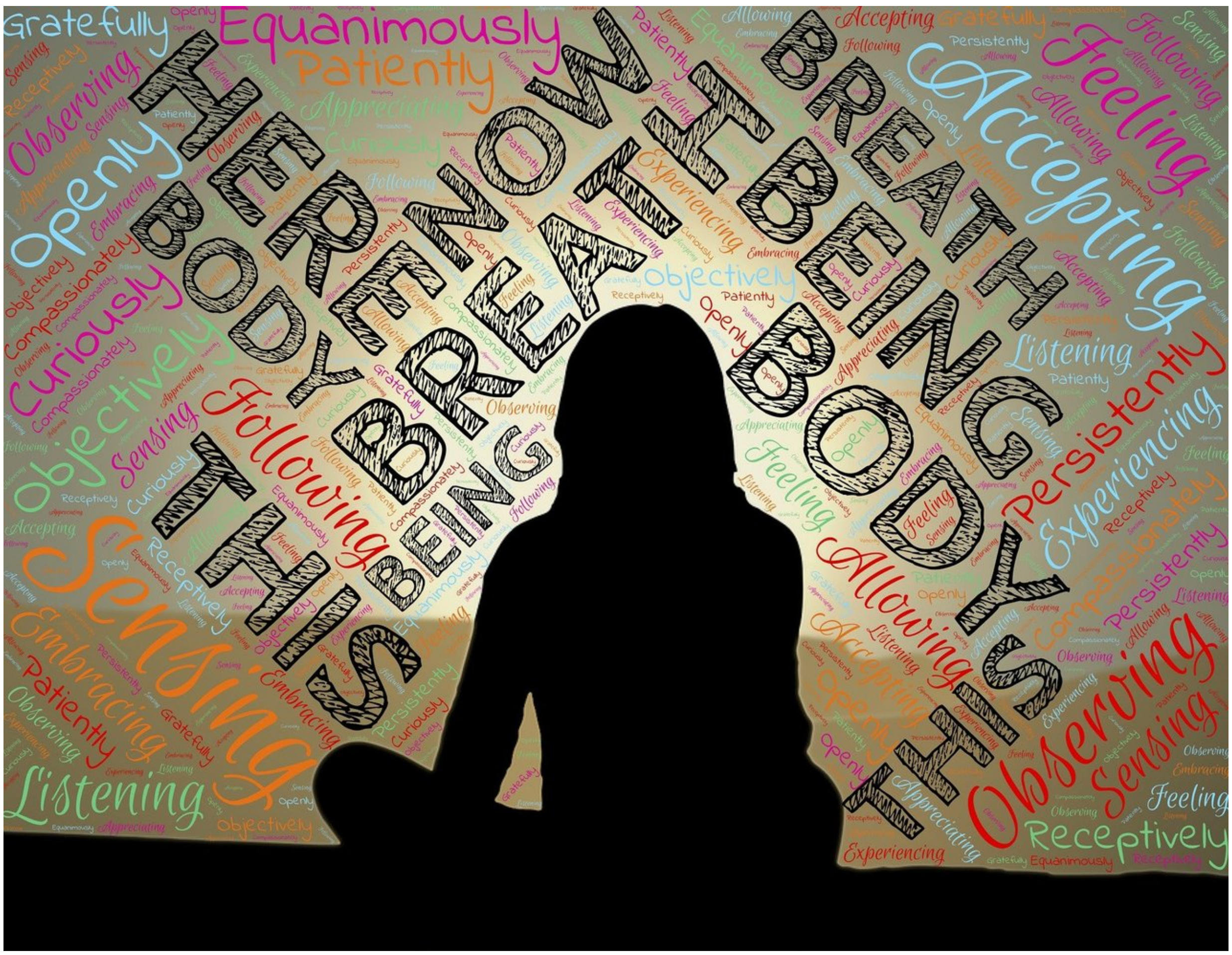
Mindfulness training may help support weight loss

December 18 2018



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Mindfulness training may improve the effectiveness of intensive weight

management programs, according to a small study published in the Endocrine Society's *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*.

Individuals who participated in mindfulness training as part of an intensive weight management program lost more weight in six months than other program participants who did not attend mindfulness courses. The findings are the result of research from the University of Warwick and the Warwickshire Institute for the Study of Diabetes Endocrinology and Metabolism at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust.

Mindfulness is a mind-body practice where individuals learn to achieve heightened awareness of their current state of mind and immediate environment in the present moment. The study looked at how this practice could be used to help individuals with obesity.

Obesity worldwide has nearly tripled since 1975, according to the World Health Organization. As of 2016, more than 1.9 billion adults worldwide met the criteria for overweight or obesity.

"This research is significant as we have shown that problematic eating behavior can be improved with mindfulness application," said the study's first author, Petra Hanson, M.B.C.H.B., B.Sc., M.R.C.P., A.F.H.E.A., a research fellow and Ph.D. student at Warwickshire Institute for the Study of Diabetes Endocrinology and Metabolism at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire in Coventry NHS Trust, U.K. "We are the first center in the United Kingdom that created a structured multidisciplinary course incorporating mindfulness and assessed its effectiveness in patients attending obesity clinics."

The study examined weight loss among 53 people who were attending the multidisciplinary tier 3 weight management program at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust. Among those

recruited into the study, 33 participants completed at least three of four mindfulness sessions. The course included discussions of the difference between mindful and mindless eating as well as an introduction to Compassionate Mind Therapy, which highlights the need to be aware of self-criticism as well as the importance of self confidence in achieving behavior change.

Mindfulness course participants lost, on average, 3 kilograms, or about 6.6 pounds, in the six-month period following the classes. Individuals who only attended one or two of the four courses lost, on average, 0.9 kilograms, or nearly 2 pounds, during the same period. The non-completers tended to weigh more at the outset of the study than those who finished the group mindfulness course.

Those who completed the mindfulness course lost 2.85 kilograms (nearly 6.3 pounds) more, on average, than a control group of 20 individuals in the tier 3 obesity management program who did not participate in the course.

"Surveys of the participants indicate mindfulness training can help this population improve their relationship with food," Hanson said. "Individuals who completed the course said they were better able to plan meals in advance and felt more confident in self-management of weight loss moving forward. Similar courses can be held in a primary care setting or even developed into digital tools. We hope this approach can be scaled up to reach a wider population."

"Mindfulness has huge potential as a strategy for achieving and maintaining good health and wellbeing," said the paper's senior author, Thomas M. Barber of Warwickshire Institute for the Study of Diabetes Endocrinology and Metabolism at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust. "With the burgeoning impact of 21st Century chronic disease, much of which relates to lifestyle behavior choices, it is

logical that focus should be on enabling the populace to make appropriate lifestyle decisions, and empowering subsequent salutary behavior change. In the context of obesity and eating-related behaviors, we have demonstrated that mindfulness techniques can do just that."

More information: Petra Hanson et al, Application of mindfulness in a tier 3 obesity service improves eating behaviour and facilitates successful weight-loss, *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* (2018). DOI: 10.1210/jc.2018-00578

Provided by The Endocrine Society

Citation: Mindfulness training may help support weight loss (2018, December 18) retrieved 26 April 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-12-mindfulness-weight-loss.html

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